



INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

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Strategic Connections resulting in Unique Solutions

Chair's Corner



The heat of summer is upon us! While this is the season for family vacations and outdoor activities, the heat provides special challenges for our employees who work outdoors. Exposure to heat increases the risk of injuries; not just from the heat, but also because of sweaty palms, fogged-up

safety glasses, dizziness, and burns from hot surfaces or steam. We've included an OSHA article, ***Using the Heat Index: A Guide for Employers*** on page 8 of this newsletter for those of you with outdoor employees.

Our FEB coordinated a **day of training with the Federal Protective Service**. This training day was in June, as an opportunity to learn more about what they do to protect federal space occupied by federal employees. The training included Presentations on "Active Shooter", Protective Intelligence & Investigations, K9, & FPS Duty Gear Display. Those who attended enjoyed the information and interaction!

The Houston FEB has **Crisis Communications training** coordinated for our senior leaders/managers. This will be a full day of training focusing on the things that can "make" or "break" senior leaders: 1) How to maintain a positive relationship with the media in the first hours of a crisis. 2) How to be a team player rather than merely an individual agency

spokesperson. 3) How to maintain a good media relationship after the crisis is over. A registration form is provided on page 10 of this newsletter for your convenience.

Our **Leadership FEB class** is well underway and have visited NOAA agencies, the Federal Detention Center & received information from TIGTA. We coordinate this leadership development program as a cost-effective solution for our federal agencies and to address the needs outlined in OPM's study on leadership training programs for new and experienced supervisors. The results of that study were just published and can be viewed at: <https://chcoc.gov/content/federal-supervisory-training-program-survey-results>.

Pre-Retirement training is usually hosted by the FEB once each year for an inter-agency audience of employees. Watch our newsletter and website for training information this fall. In the meantime, we want to offer additional information for your planning purposes. We all tend to focus on the financial planning for retirement and may neglect to plan for the *social changes* retirement will impose. Read "The Keys to Healthy Living: Friendship & Purpose" in this newsletter, outlining the importance of connections for our health and well-being.

Tim Jeffcoat, Chair

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Sick Leave, a Gift that Keeps on Giving

Sick leave is one of the best benefits ever given to federal employees. As the name suggests, it was originally intended to be used when you are ill. However, over the years its use has been expanded to cover childbirth, adoption, absence for funerals, family care and bereavement.

Sick leave is also what I call “the gift that keeps on giving.” Here’s why. When you retire any unused sick leave hours will be credited in the calculation of your annuity. This can be a substantial increase, especially for those with long government careers or a history of using relatively little sick leave throughout their careers—or both.

If you are under CSRS, each month of unused sick leave will increase your annuity by 1/6 of 1 percent. If you have a full year it will be increased by 2 percent.

If you are under FERS, each month sick leave will increase your annuity by 1/12 of 1 percent. If you retire at age 62 or later with at least 20 years of service, the multiplier will be increased to 1/12 of 1.1 percent. A full year’s worth would result in a boost of 1 and 1.1 percent, respectively.

At retirement, your annuity will first be calculated using your years and full months of actual service. Any days of service beyond the last full month will be converted into hours (5.8 hrs = 1 day) and added to your unused sick leave hours. Here’s where it gets a little tricky.

See also, [Sick Leave Credit for Federal Retirement at ask.fedweek.com](#)

For retirement crediting purposes, 5.797+

hours, not eight, equals one day. OPM gets that figure by dividing 2,087 – the number of work hours in a year – by 360. That’s because annuity payments are based on 12 30-day months. Therefore, approximately 174 hours long equals a month of service, for annuity purposes. After those extra months are credited in the calculation, any days beyond the last full month are discarded.



Note: If you are a FERS employee who will have a CSRS component in your annuity, any sick leave hours up to the maximum number you had when you transferred to FERS will be credited to your CSRS annuity. Any sick leave hours above that will be credited to your FERS annuity.

While sick leave can be used to increase your annuity, it can’t be used to make you eligible to retire. It can only be added after you have met the age and service requirements to do that. If you leave government before you are eligible to retire and later apply for a deferred annuity, you won’t get any credit for your unused sick leave in the calculation of that benefit.

With one exception, if you return to work for the government after a break in service, unused sick leave hours will be restored. Here’s the exception. If you retire and then are rehired into a position where you can receive both your annuity and the full salary of your position, you won’t get any credit for that sick leave (or any that you earn while on the job) when you retire again.

Written by Reg Jones
<https://www.fedweek.com/reg-jones-experts-view/sick-leave-a-gift-that-keeps-on-giving/>.

Spotlighting Information in Public Service

Did you Know?



The Social Security Administration (SSA) is headed by a Commissioner and has a staff of almost 60,000 employees.

SSA's central office is located in Baltimore, Maryland. Our network of over 1,400 offices includes:

- Field offices
- Teleservice centers
- Processing centers
- Hearing offices

We also have a presence in U.S. embassies around the globe. The rich diversity of our employees mirrors the diversity across America. We have a proud history of [protecting the integrity of our programs](#) and providing [superior customer service](#).

Our Mission

Deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public.

Our Vision

Proudly serving Social Security Customers throughout their lifetime, when and where they need us.

The Social Security Administration was founded on simple but very deep values and

principles. We are a community-based organization, and in many communities we are the front door to the federal government, through which people walk during times of need. The person-to-person conversation at the center of our service-delivery model for the past 80 years is what makes Social Security unique.

Since President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act in 1935, our agency has served the American public with distinction, delivering critical benefits to support our customers at points of transition and loss in their lives. We are one of the largest government programs in the world, disbursing almost \$1 trillion dollars in federal benefits per year – with a consistently high accuracy rate and with an administrative cost of only 1.3%.

At Social Security, we remain true to our core principles and continue to provide critical services to those who need us most. We are committed to serving all of our [64.9 million customers](#) efficiently, effectively, and compassionately, and to preserving the integrity of the Social Security programs for future generations.

Submitted by: [Lee Alviar](#)
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HOW TO BUILD ENTHUSIASM IN A HALF-HEARTED WORLD

Anything you do without enthusiasm makes you less of who you were meant to be.

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Once enthusiasm is lost, it’s like starting a fire with wet wood.

Enthusiasm is:

- Strength.
- Joy.
- Grit.
- Sweet.

Enthusiasm is the difference between putting in your time and meaningful effort.

Nearly all the great improvements, discoveries, inventions, and achievements which have elevated and blessed humanity have been the triumphs of enthusiasm. Orison Swett Marden

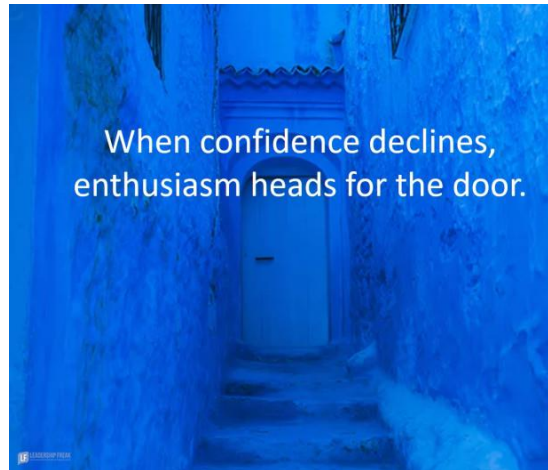
Enthusiasm indicates wholeheartedness.

7 ways to nurture and protect enthusiasm in a half-hearted world:

1. Don’t compare yourself with slackers. It’s not fair that you work hard and someone else drifts. Forget about it. Resentment quenches enthusiasm.
2. Notice low enthusiasm and take action to expel it *in yourself*. Low enthusiasm insults your humanity. You’re better than half-heartedness.
3. Send chronic complainers to your competitors. Complainers love explaining why half-heartedness is appropriate.
4. Do your best to hang with enthusiastic people. Those who delight in

complaining, criticizing, and gossip destroy enthusiasm.

5. Enjoy appreciation, but don’t need it. You are seldom appreciated as much as you deserve.
6. Have enough confidence to learn enthusiastically.
7. Do difficult work with enthusiasm. Painful labor done enthusiastically is completed sooner.



Confidence and enthusiasm:

When confidence declines, enthusiasm heads for the door.

If you want to build enthusiasm in your team, instill them with confidence.

Confidence building

101 for leaders:

1. Your confidence fuels confidence. Believe in your team’s ability to deliver meaningful results.
2. Remember people’s effort and contribution. When you remember someone’s effort, you instill them with enthusiasm to keep working. “I remember when you”
3. Discuss and honor progress.
 - “Tell me about the progress you’re making.”
 - “What’s different about you?”
 - “How are you improving?”

Leadership without enthusiasm is soul-sucking drudgery.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2018/05/22/how-to-build-enthusiasm-in-a-half-hearted-world/>

No snow days for teleworking government employees

Federal employees [already approved to telework](#) from their homes will not be granted weather or safety leave in an emergency situation that would otherwise close government offices, according to new inclement weather and safety regulations issued by the Office of Personnel Management April 10, 2018.

“Under section 6329c(b) of the Administrative Leave Act, as reflected in OPM

regulations, an agency may grant weather and safety leave only if an employee is prevented from safely traveling to or performing work at an ‘approved

location’ due to an act of God, a terrorist attack, or another condition that prevents an employee or group of employees from safely traveling to or safely performing work at an approved location,” OPM Director Jeff Pon wrote in a memo on the regulation.

“Because employees [who are participating in a telework program](#) under applicable agency policies are typically able to safely perform work at their approved locations (e.g., their homes), such an employee will

generally not be granted weather and safety leave.”

An employee approved for telework can be granted leave during an emergency situation if that employee was unable to reasonably anticipate the emergency event and therefore could not prepare to telework.

For example, an employee would have

advance notice of a clearly predicted snowstorm in their area and be able to prepare, whereas an event like a terrorist attack does not offer the same advance warning.



Snow and other emergency situations will not prevent teleworking employees from being required to work under new Office of Personnel Management requirements. (J. Scott Applewhite/AP)

As part of the regulations, OPM reconvened its interagency working group for dismissal and closure procedures to update those procedures to reflect the new policy. Chief human capital officers can request to have a representative from their agency participate in the working group.

<https://www.federaltimes.com/management/hr/2018/04/10/no-snow-days-for-teleworking-government-employees/>

Better Training Is Essential for Performance Management

Every organization has employees who fail to satisfy performance expectations. Research shows that the cost these poor performers exact on an organization exceeds the benefits of employing a high performer. For that reason President Trump's [executive order streamlining removal procedures](#) is on target and fully justified. However, the new policy should also prompt attention to badly needed reform of the practices contributing to the problem.

It's important to appreciate that employees who start their careers expecting to be failures are very rare. There are a number of possible reasons for failure and most are not the fault of the employee.



The roots of this problem are deeply embedded in the history of civil service and in government's workforce management philosophy. Terminating a few employees is analogous to digging out weeds in a garden of roses.

A [core failure](#) that's been cited in studies going back at least two decades is that agencies do not provide adequate supervisor training and retraining. The problem is compounded when agencies conclude that a newly promoted supervisor is not up to the job. To avoid the "uncomfortable situation" of continuing to work with someone they have deemed unsuccessful, [agencies reportedly](#) instead leave the individual in his or her supervisory job. So the problems continue to fester.

Added to that is that it's still apparently common for promotions to supervisory positions to be based more on technical skills and seniority than on the interpersonal skills needed to be effective in the new role. Then when they are in the new role, too often they are not provided adequate

feedback on strengths and weaknesses, and of course the best supervisors and managers are typically not recognized and rewarded.

Further, agencies have failed to provide performance systems that focus on the competencies associated with effective supervision. There is no excuse for allowing this to continue.

The same problems affect individual performance at every level, from the Senior Executive Service to the onboarding of new hires. Everyone needs and benefits from ongoing training. Reports on Millennials show adequate training is a priority in their job search.

Furthermore, hiring or promoting the wrong person is costly both for the individual and their co-workers. It's a mistake to hold an employee accountable for poor performance when he or she does not fit the job, either because of job skills or temperament.

Lawyers argue that before a poor performer is terminated, employers should review and confirm the adequacy of the following practices, as outlined in employment law articles.

- Communication of expectations: Each employee needs to understand what they are expected to accomplish. It's not simply what constitutes acceptable performance but also should specify minimally acceptable performance. The courts want to see current job documentation.
- Training: New hires and existing employees need adequate training to insure they have opportunities to develop requisite skills as they progress up their career ladder.
- Periodic review of expectations: In today's environment, performance expectations should be reviewed periodically throughout the year. As the year unfolds, it's likely that changing circumstances will require managers to redefine goals. That's completely appropriate.
- Scheduled reviews: Employees need to understand the review cycle. Informal feedback is appropriate at any time. The

Better Training Is Essential for Performance Management (cont'd)

year-end review should be formal and face to face.

- Identification of unsatisfactory performance: Unsatisfactory performance needs to be clearly communicated along with guidance on what's needed. The communication should be in writing.
- Performance improvement plan: Employees who need to show improved performance need adequate time to do so. The PIP should clearly let the employee know what's expected.

Handled by the book, poor performing employees will not have grounds for an appeal.

Additionally, my experience confirms the importance of reviewing ratings for bias or discrimination. It's also advantageous to adopt a practice increasingly common in business referred to as a calibration committee where managers explain and defend at least the high and low ratings in meetings with their peers. Employees need the assurance they will be treated fairly.

But even when an employer adopts best practices and commits to making performance management a priority, there will be failures. It's much easier to manage problem employees in the private sector.

Unfortunately in government performance management is the weakest of all HR practices. It should be a priority but rarely is. It's essential when agencies need to improve results. When the same performance dimensions are used with both employees and supervisors, it's clearly a problem. Adding "supervision" to the list of dimensions is not the answer.

The weakness is all too obvious when the distribution of ratings is posted. It's simply not credible that 80 or 90 percent of a group are outstanding. That's true at every level, including the SES. No corporation would allow it to continue.

Gallup's engagement surveys and their [Q12 survey questions](#) highlight the importance of managers and their working relationships with

staff. The first question is: "Do you know what is expected of you at work?" All but a couple of the questions relate to the management of performance.

Highlighting a related issue, Stephen Shih, deputy associate director of the Office of Personnel Management, posted a recent column on the OPM Director's Blog, "[Inspiring Change through Employee Engagement](#)." There has been a lot written about creating an inspiring work environment. It's worth pointing out that creating one rides on effective day to day supervision.

A fundamental step is identifying and promoting those individuals who have the promise to be effective supervisors and providing adequate training and support. In the decades since the SES was created, the role of managers and supervisors has had far too little attention.

Another step that might be resisted by managers but is increasingly used in other sectors is inviting employees to assess the performance of their boss as well as other job issues hampering their performance. The first year may be unsettling but the feedback will enhance career prospects.

Improved performance management practices will become even more important if the Administration follows through with the plan to move to pay for performance. (I strongly support the change.) Then it will be essential to make year-end ratings defensible.

Firing a few employees is no doubt warranted but it's the wrong focus. A thread that is common to all the 'best places to work' is that in a positive, challenging work environment people will respond and commit to performing at surprisingly high levels. Everyone would benefit, including the public, if government invested in creating a work experience where employees are committed to doing their best.

https://www.govexec.com/excellence/promising-practices/2018/06/better-training-essential-performance-management/148743/?oref=govexec_today_nl

Using the Heat Index: A Guide for Employers

Introduction

Outdoor workers who are exposed to hot and humid conditions are at risk of heat-related illness. The risk of heat-related illness becomes greater as the weather gets hotter and more humid. This situation is particularly serious when hot weather arrives suddenly early in the season, before workers have had a chance to adapt to warm weather.

For people working outdoors in hot weather, both air temperature and humidity affect how hot they feel. The "heat index" is a single value that takes both temperature and humidity into account. The higher the heat index, the hotter the weather feels, since sweat does not readily evaporate and cool the skin. The heat index is a better measure than air temperature alone for estimating the risk to workers from environmental heat sources.

Heat-related illness can be prevented.

OSHA does not have a specific standard that covers working in hot environments. Nonetheless, under the OSH Act, employers have a duty to protect workers from recognized serious hazards in the workplace, including heat-related hazards. This guide helps employers and worksite supervisors prepare and implement hot weather plans. It explains how to use the heat index to determine when extra precautions are needed at a worksite to protect workers from environmental contributions to heat-related illness. Workers performing strenuous activity, workers using heavy or non-breathable protective clothing, and workers who are new to

an outdoor job need additional precautions beyond those warranted by heat index alone.

Workers new to outdoor jobs are generally most at risk for heat-related illnesses. For example,

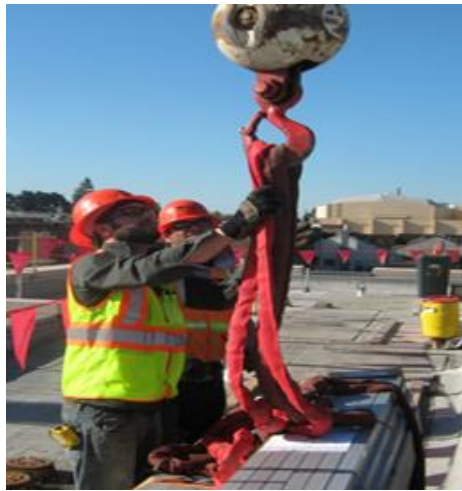
Cal/OSHA investigated 25 incidents of heat-related illness in 2005. In almost half of the cases, the worker involved was on their first day of work and in 80% of the cases the worker involved had only been on the job for four or fewer days. That's why it's important to gradually increase the workload or allow more frequent breaks to help new workers and those returning to a job after time away build up a tolerance for hot conditions. Make sure that workers understand the risks and are "[acclimatized](#)".

Outdoor workers include any workers who spend a substantial portion of the shift outdoors. Examples include construction workers, agricultural

workers, baggage handlers, electrical power transmission and control workers, and landscaping and yard maintenance workers. These workers are at risk of heat-related illness when the heat index is high. Additional risk factors are listed below. *These must be taken into consideration even when the heat index is lower.*

- Work in direct sunlight - adds up to 15 degrees to the heat index.
- Perform prolonged or strenuous work
- Wear heavy protective clothing or impermeable suits

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/index.html



Two primary sources of heat for workers:

Workers become overheated from two primary sources: (1) the environmental conditions in which they work and (2) the internal heat generated by physical labor. Heat-related illnesses occur when the body is not able to lose enough heat to balance the heat generated by physical work and external heat sources. Weather conditions are the primary external heat sources for outdoor workers.

THE KEYS TO HEALTHY LIVING: FRIENDSHIP AND PURPOSE

Changes in lifestyle and outlook can affect longevity

As we think about the prospect of living longer, millions of us are taking more responsibility for our own health. We're realizing that the choices we make each day are more important than an occasional visit to the doctor's office.

As a result, we're seeking more and better information to help us make healthier decisions, and tools for lifestyle changes that lead us toward physical and mental fitness and enhance our well-being, not just treat our ailments.

But we also need to focus on things like building strong social connections and reducing loneliness and social isolation, realizing a sense of purpose, and developing a more positive, optimistic outlook on aging.

Social connections are important to your health. People with close friends are more likely to get plenty of sleep, eat healthy foods, maintain peace of mind and have less stress, engage in brain health activities and take on new challenges or hobbies.

Loneliness is the new smoking—according to one researcher, it is equally as bad for you as inhaling 15 cigarettes a day. Studies show that loneliness can shave eight years off life expectancy, that it has a big negative effect on quality of life, and that it's the single largest predictor of dissatisfaction with health care. The mortality risk for loneliness is greater than that of obesity. Social isolation of older adults is associated with an estimated \$6.7B in additional Medicare spending annually.

Social isolation has become such a problem in Great Britain that Prime Minister Theresa May appointed a “minister of loneliness” to measure it, determine its impact and develop a strategy to address it. Here in the United States, CareMore, based in California, became

the first U.S. health care provider group to hire a “chief togetherness officer” to directly address loneliness and its impact on health.

Having a purpose in life is also important to health as we get older and is a key factor in aging successfully. A sense of purpose for many is more important than making money, and it's associated with a wide range of better health outcomes including reduced risk of mortality, stroke, heart attack and Alzheimer's disease. People with a sense of purpose also get better sleep, have fewer nights of hospital admission and go to the doctor less often. And they are more likely to take care of their

health—to eat healthier, exercise more, avoid abusing drugs and alcohol, and seek out better preventive health services.

Evidence also shows that optimism about aging has an impact on our health, adding 7.5 years to our lives. Those with an upbeat view of aging are more likely to fully recover from a severe disability, have a larger hippocampus (a part of the brain that affects memory), show less anatomical evidence of Alzheimer's on an MRI, and have up to an 80% lower risk of a cardiovascular event.

We're discovering that changes in lifestyle and medical advances can increase our lifespan and shrink the number of years spent with a disability. But it's also vital that we have something to get us up in the morning and someone to share our lives with—and that we approach each day with a smile.

Article written by Jo Ann Jenkins, CEO of AARP and reprinted from AARP Bulletin June 2018. Image added from shutterstock.



Life is
Better
with
Friends



Crisis Communications Spokespersons Training for Executives and Senior Leaders



Date:	Friday, September 14, 2018
Time:	8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Location:	Leland Building, 1919 Smith Street, 10 th Floor, Houston (Bayou Room)
Why?	<p>Focusing on the things that can “make” or “break” senior leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to maintain a positive relationship with the media in the first hours of a crisis. • How to be a team player rather than merely an individual agency spokesperson. • How to maintain a good media relationship after the crisis is over.
Topics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quick primer on what to expect from persistent, aggressive reporters covering your problem, crisis or event. • A total of three on-camera exercises. Each exercise is critiqued in an open forum by the instructor. • Training based on a realistic scenario chosen by the client. • Instructors and role players with significant journalism and media relations experience.
Who Should Attend?	Agency Leaders, Senior Managers that have agency responsibility that would place them in a situation to be approached by the media in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.
Cost:	\$1,175.00 per person

Registration

Name _____ Agency _____

Address: _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Position Title: _____

Register early! This class will be limited to twelve participants!

Mail registration to:	Federal Executive Board 2320 La Branch Street, Rm 1107 Houston, TX 77004
Email to:	LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, cancellations will be permitted through May 29, 2018. However, after that date, registrations must be honored by the individual or agency involved. If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!